United Nations A/C.4/66/SR.11

General Assembly
Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
6 January 2012

Original: English

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 11th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 19 October 2011, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Ciss (Vice-Chair) ..... (Senegal)
later: Ms. Miculescu (Chair) ..... (Romania)

Contents

Agenda item 55: Questions relating to information (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

11-55517 (E)

Please recycle

In the absence of Ms. Miculescu (Romania), Mr. Ciss (Senegal), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 55: Questions relating to information (*continued*) (A/66/21 and A/66/261)

1. **Ms. Pamaranon** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that, as the Department of Public Information continued to provide balanced and relevant information about the United Nations, it was vital for it to make that information, and all important documents, available on its website in the six official languages of the Organization. There had, in fact, been welcome cooperation between the Department and universities to translate the website into Russian, Spanish, Chinese, and Arabic, as a way of increasing visits to the site, especially from developing countries; yet even so, the Arabic website remained the least visited, despite the popularity of the Internet in Arabic-speaking countries. The United Nations information centres and offices throughout the world had themselves made commendable efforts to develop web pages in local languages. Another way to promote multilingualism was the observance of International Mother Language Day, in which the Department participated annually.

2. While the use also of social media to distribute information was a timely new approach to bridging the digital divide that threatened universal access to information, the Department should continue to provide information, again in all six languages, through traditional media for those who lacked advanced means of communication. It was also important for the Department to continue its significant efforts to reach the young people of the world and broaden their awareness of international affairs. The members of ASEAN also encouraged the Department to work closely with Member States and civil society in order to further all the Millennium Development Goals.

3. In an effort to use the free flow of information to achieve common progress in the region, ASEAN itself had adopted a plan of action that included promoting language learning through exchanges among its members as a way of fostering understanding of their diverse cultures.

4. **Ms. Bulhoon** (United Arab Emirates), referring to the contemporary information technology revolution, said that some developing States were lagging behind, and consequently it was the responsibility of the developed States to provide them with the assistance they needed to overcome the lag. In the Arab region, information was of particular importance in conveying the real nature of the movement of change sweeping Arab societies.

5. The United Arab Emirates, for its part, had embarked upon a policy designed to enlist state-of-the-art information and communication technology to address issues affecting the State. The national media had been experiencing a gre t flowering, and Dubai was a free zone for the exercise of all kinds of information-related activities.

6. Every year her country hosted the Arab Media Forum, which sought to open channels for in-depth dialogue and exchanges among Arab and Western media representatives, and presented annual awards honouring distinguished Arab journalists in all fields as well as awards to the families of journalists who had died in the performance of their professional duty.

7. International legal instruments should be enacted to facilitate greater international cooperation in the field of information. Moreover, international media conglomerates should abide by ethical standards and also maintain their credibility by, inter alia, broadcasting the facts about the suffering of the Palestinian people as a result of the policies of aggression, blockade, killing and settlement expansion being pursued by Israel in flagrant violation of human rights principles and the provisions of international law.

8. **Mr. Hamed** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that in view of the significance of information in building societies and enhancing their people's awareness, the Syrian Arabic Republic had recently adopted a new Information Act aimed at enabling those working to provide information to conduct their important mission more effectively.

9. The Committee on Information and the Department of Public Information were responsible for making the voice of the United Nations heard throughout the world. Accordingly, it was essential for them to use reliable sources of information that were not confined to the Western media and that did not politicize their material or seek to lead their audiences into error by distorting facts. The Organization's credibility and impartiality were at stake. The Arab

region was frequently the subject of such distortion, unfortunately.

10. The efforts of the Department to strengthen the United Nations Internet site were welcome. However, the Arabic-language site was still not sufficiently developed. Corrective measures should be taken in the interests of parity among all the Organization's official languages.

11. The Department was to be commended for following the question of Palestine, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions, and urged it to give still more attention to that issue, in view of the suffering of the Palestinian people over so many decades. Israel, with the support of some major Powers, continued to occupy the Palestinian territories and deny their people their legitimate rights, systematically violating human rights and international humanitarian law by confiscating land, demolishing homes, building new settlements, building the apartheid wall, desecrating and violating Islamic and Christian sites, terrorizing people, and blockading Gaza. Accordingly, it was important for the yearly special information programme on the question of Palestine to be continued.

12. The Department might also play a greater role in encouraging dialogue between cultures and building bridges of mutual understanding between peoples and mutual respect for their different values and religious beliefs. In that connection, freedom of expression was a universal right, but one that should not be used to attack the beliefs or cultural heritage of others.

13. **Ms. Zamora** (Costa Rica) said her country found that full, free, transparent and multidirectional information was indispensable for a healthy democracy, regardless of how it was disseminated. Education and both traditional and new media were essential to contemporary communication. The United Nations was using the new media effectively and had made efforts to reduce the digital divide. Yet the divide could be smaller if all Governments devoted resources wisely to developing proper networks, infrastructure and entrepreneurship. Some countries had found ways to provide access to advanced wireless media with limited financial resources, while others had devoted resources to censoring their media. The United Nations was well placed to encourage key national and regional partnerships that would expand communications networks.

14. Increased cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the Committee on Information strengthened the effectiveness of both. While it was heartening that multilingualism was being discussed, four of the six official languages were still not equally available online. Therefore, it remained vital to explore initiatives to ensure language parity. The Rio Group proposal to disseminate press releases in all official languages on a specified rotation was a good option.

15. The work of the Department on issues related to development, peacekeeping operations and the peace process in the Middle East was commendable. It had also done much to increase awareness of the effects of climate change and to develop a communications strategy for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). Consequently, the limited financial resources for the Department's activities were a matter of concern; and Member States, in particular developed countries, were urged to meet their financial obligations to the Organization. Spending and allocation priorities should be refined to maximize efficiency and creativity, perhaps by reducing costs through partnerships with academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, and the media.

16. **Mr. Panahov** (Azerbaijan) said that his Government supported innovative partnerships with civil society, academic institutions, and the creative arts community. It welcomed the Department's outreach programmes highlighting international events, such as the international days commemorating Nowruz and the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. It was clear that managing the flow of information became increasingly important if information of global significance was to reach a broad audience. Vast segments of the population in developing countries did not benefit from new technology, and more should be done to fill that gap. Therefore, the Department should improve its activities in areas of special interest to developing countries and others with special needs.

17. Official statements of the United Nations, including press releases, must follow the standards laid down in the Charter of the United Nations. Any departure from or loose interpretation of the position or the accepted language of the Organization, especially in respect of sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of recognized borders, was unacceptable. Azerbaijan supported the work of the Department in

providing information on issues of importance such as peace and security, development, human rights and the needs of the least developed countries.

18. **Ms. Ow** (Singapore) said that while new media formats had revolutionized how information was disseminated, and had in general improved ease of access to information, the digital divide persisted and was hampering economic growth and social development. In response, her Government had developed a master plan to create a nation conversant with the new technologies by bridging the digital divide in particular for the disabled, the elderly and low-income students, through targeted training in the new media. Other centres throughout the island catered to those in the general population who did not have computers or required help with the Internet. Since the Organization played a crucial role in narrowing the gap between the information-rich and the information-poor, it should consider how to improve digital inclusion for all, regardless of their demographic profile.

19. **Mr. Al-Saiyani** (Yemen) said that his delegation supported the efforts of the Department of Public Information to raise public awareness of the work of the United Nations and to illuminate its mission in key priority areas. In particular, the Department was to be commended for undertaking annually the special information programme on the question of Palestine, the International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, held in Budapest in 2011, and the training programme for Palestinian media practitioners.

20. The Internet was an information and communication medium of unparalleled importance, and consequently the United Nations website was an ideal means of promoting awareness of the Organization's work and aims. Unfortunately, there was a widening gap between the content produced in English and that produced in the other official languages, and that situation might be impairing the site's effectiveness. United Nations information activities in general should promote a better linguistic balance, and should also do more to encourage dialogue and understanding between cultures.

21. The United Nations Information Centre in Sana'a was of particular importance because of its location in a densely populated Arab country that was also one of the least developed. In addition to propagating the principles of the United Nations and helping to make the Organization better known, the Centre had supported the United Nations communications team in Yemen by helping it to produce radio programmes on the subjects of education, employment and early marriage.

22. **Mr. Bonkoungou** (Burkina Faso) said that the Organization must adapt to constantly changing communications technology as it conveyed its ideals while also weighing the needs of each region. In matters of public information, the Committee on Information had the central policy role, and it should continue to support the programmes and strategies implemented by the Department of Public Information to explain the work of the United Nations and give it greater visibility. The Department itself had done laudable work in promoting the action of the United Nations on issues including peace and security, the Millennium Development Goals, climate change, human rights and maternal and child health.

23. The Department continued to take advantage of progress in information technology, in particular the social media, to reach an ever-broader audience. Efforts should be made to promote better access to new technologies for the countries of the South, especially in Africa. Nevertheless, traditional media should continue to be used, as should efforts to enhance language parity in the work produced by the Department.

24. The United Nations information centres were vital in bringing the message of the United Nations to local populations in developing countries, and they were to be commended for regularly striving to improve their information programmes, in partnership with the governments, civil society institutions and media of the countries concerned. Burkina Faso itself hosted and fully supported an information centre for the Sahel region, which was a reliable source of up-to-date information about the United Nations for a vast and diversified audience and often worked in conjunction with regional media representatives and networks. The centres were important to the visibility of the Organization, and it was crucial to ensure that they were adequately funded. The rationalization of centres should be discussed on a case-by-case basis with the host government and other interested countries in a particular region.

25. **Ms. Dunlop** (Brazil), observing that the United Nations message needed to be delivered in as many languages as possible, praised the work of the

Portuguese Unit of United Nations Radio, which, despite its limited resources, had played an important role in broadcasting information worldwide. Her Government continued to support the United Nations Information Centre in Rio de Janeiro, usefully active in Brazil for more than six decades, and also favoured the early establishment of a centre in Luanda, Angola, to address the needs of all Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa. The centres were essential to the information activities of the Organization, especially in developing countries, and she encouraged the Department of Public Information and Member States to explore creative ways to support them, for example, in the case of host countries, by offering premises free of charge. Brazil was pleased to be hosting the upcoming global meeting of directors of information centres, which would be discussing information issues related to the Rio+20 Conference.

26. It was very important to promote both traditional and new media because both were critical in reaching the broadest audience possible. The synergy between the two had been very effective in the aftermath of the recent natural disasters in Haiti and in Japan. A combination of media could also increase awareness of pressing issues such as sustainable development, food security, the Millennium Development Goals, or major environmental problems, particularly leading up to the Rio+20 Conference. Moreover, as the experience of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) had proven, constant communication with local populations was indispensable to the success of peacekeeping missions, and the Department of Public Information should explore ways of strengthening such communication.

27. Her delegation appreciated the Department's programme to raise awareness about the question of Palestine and promote dialogue among journalists, civil society, the academic community and policymakers in order to foster peace in the Middle East, and other valuable initiatives such as the outreach programme on the Holocaust aimed at combating intolerance and contributing to a culture of peace. The Department was also to be commended for increasing online access to historical United Nations information and documentation. Preserving institutional memory would be instrumental in the future work of the Organization.

28. *Ms. Miculescu (Romania) took the Chair.*

29. **Mr. Nakamae** (Japan) said that his Government welcomed the efforts of the Department of Public Information to engage the new media because they had a direct impact on the emotional aspect of public opinion, as just seen during the Arab Spring or the tsunami in Japan. However, it cautioned that senior United Nations officials had to be actively involved in content management, since information delivered through social networking sites was unfiltered; and they had to be prepared to handle the response, which was immediate. While the new media seemed to be user-friendly, they were time-consuming and could absorb resources quickly. A greater reliance on new media had to be balanced against the use of traditional media so that funding could be appropriately allocated. In that connection, he called on the Department to continue to work strategically and enhance efficiency and transparency.

30. **Mr. Benmehidi** (Algeria) said that the digital revolution had profoundly changed how people thought, acted and learned, and how countries managed their economic and public affairs. The United Nations had to adopt a global strategy in delivering information, to ensure that all States had a fair share of the benefits of the new technologies and equal access to information that was crucial to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, improving the lives of billions, and resolving conflicts. Still, some aspects of the rapid changes in communication were of legitimate concern. It was important for the Organization to use the new media judiciously so as not to accentuate the digital divide.

31. His delegation welcomed the emphasis placed by the Department of Public Information on new means of enhancing global awareness, and on internal communication that gave Member States a better understanding of United Nations activities, thereby attracting support for them. The Department's contribution to a documentary film on the stories of Algerians who had renounced terrorism illustrated the major role it could play in making the public comprehend the roots and terrible consequences of terrorism and the need to combat it. All the main activities of the Organization should continue to be covered with equal energy.

32. The Department should work towards full parity for all six official languages in what was produced on the Internet and in its broadcasts and publications. Moreover, it was crucial to publicize the reforms and

advances made in the developing countries, which were often lost in the constant stream of information from the North. A matter of concern, however, were the persistent cuts to Department resources, which significantly reduced the capacity of the United Nations information centres, particularly in the developing countries.

33. His Government was committed to working with the United Nations and other international bodies towards the establishment of a global system for the comprehensive, orderly and proficient use of information technologies in the service of peace and international security.

34. **Mr. Ruiz** (Colombia) said that, as part of its valuable work, the Department of Public Information brought nations together by promoting a shared understanding of the Organization's focus and priorities through the United Nations information centres. The centres had extended their outreach by establishing relationships with television stations worldwide, diversifying audio-visual materials, facilitating access to information for people with disabilities, and training local information officers. The Information Centre in Bogotá had been very active in publicizing the work of the United Nations, having held 18 press conferences in 2011 on topics such as peacekeeping, climate change, human rights, trade and development and highlighted population and environmental issues. Information had also been disseminated through social media, which were particularly popular with young people. The Centre's social mission included programmes on United Nations topics in the schools and poverty-awareness campaigns. Since the Centre served also Ecuador and Venezuela, Colombia recommended that its staff and computer systems be expanded for better coverage of the region. There should always be consultation with host countries before decisions regarding any of the centres were made.

35. Multilingualism must continue to be an essential element in the communication strategies of the Organization, as a way of providing universal access to information and finding creative ways to disseminate it. The aim should be to publish information in all six official languages; and his delegation welcomed the Department's plan to make documents available in over 100 languages through United Nations information centre websites. Colombia, committed to freedom of the press and of expression, welcomed United Nations efforts to disseminate objective, accurate and consistent information in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

36. **Mr. Bamba** (Côte d'Ivoire), welcoming the essential work being done by the Department of Public Information to publicize the major areas of United Nations action, said that among the events covered by the Department, the most significant for his nation had been those leading up to the inauguration of President Ouattara and the restoration of peace in Côte d'Ivoire with United Nations assistance. His country was deeply grateful. The Department should publicize all such success stories.

37. The Department was also an excellent messenger in highlighting the main topic chosen by the current President of the General Assembly for its thematic debate — the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes — a practice the Department should continue. The settlement of the Ivorian crisis had been an exemplary instance of conflict resolution. At several stages, different types of mediation, both domestic and international, had come into play: among them, by the peacekeeping radio station of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), which had reached millions of listeners; by the United Nations, which had certified the 2010 presidential election; and by the national Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which had promoted understanding. The Department could usefully draw attention to the example of Côte d'Ivoire to underscore the importance of mediation in the settlement of conflicts, itself a prerequisite for any economic or social development.

38. **Ms. Chowdhary** (India) said that the role of the Department of Public Information was pivotal in strategically communicating the activities and concerns of the Organization with the greatest public impact, and she welcomed the progress it had made in effectively reaching the targeted audiences. Its Strategic Communications Division and UNifeed had generated considerable public support for peacekeeping operations, for example. Yet information must be relevant and meaningful, and disseminated in a way that was enjoyable. The Department must strive constantly to improve its content management and its coverage, especially of activities that had a direct impact on the lives of ordinary people, like humanitarian action. It should work more closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and other

United Nations bodies to provide impartial, timely information on regular peacekeeping activities, while highlighting the success stories.

39. Given the differing technological capabilities of countries, it was essential for information to be disseminated through a broad spectrum of media. Innovative forms of contemporary communication, should be used along with cost-effective, traditional means of communication to reach the widest possible audience. It was encouraging to note the increase in social media followers of United Nations Radio, showing how traditional media could capitalize on new media.

40. The goal should be a more linguistically equal world. It was commendable that the Department produced information in over 150 languages, including Hindi, Bengali and Urdu, but its promotion of multilingualism should be strengthened in terms of parity among the six official languages in the content of the website. It was also important to increase the level of local participation in the production of Department material, but that would encourage local talent to become involved with the work of the Organization. The United Nations information centres, working in 48 languages and maintaining websites in 29 languages, were also crucial in enhancing the public image of the Organization, particularly in the developing countries. The Department must work with host countries to strengthen the centres, and they must be given adequate budgetary resources.

41. The Outreach Division had developed commendable programmes such as the United Nations Academic Impact initiative, for which the University of Calcutta was the global hub for peace and conflict resolution, or the celebrity advocacy initiative, under which Indian cricket star Sachin Tendulkar was serving as Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations Environment Programme. The Department of Public Information had India's full support in its endeavour to project the United Nations story.

42. **Mr. Wolfe** (Jamaica), underscoring the key role of the United Nations information centres, said that his Government supported the work of the Centre in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, serving the Caribbean, but believed that it would be more effective if an information officer were assigned to Kingston, Jamaica, to serve the needs of those in the northern tip of the Caribbean.

43. The Rio+20 Conference could be a watershed moment in efforts to protect the planet for future generations. He commended the Department of Public Information for developing a system-wide communications strategy for the Conference, and urged it to build on informed discussions that had been held on sustainable development and related issues and could be held through the network of information centres with local communities.

44. Jamaica was particularly supportive of the Department's outreach to young people which included their involvement under the United Nations Academic Impact initiative, in which more universities from the Caribbean region should be encouraged to participate.

45. The social media were being used more by the Department and that had made the Organization more accessible than ever. Still, his delegation commended the Department for continuing to rely on traditional means of communication, and for having upgraded the United Nations Radio website and its content management system.

46. Jamaica would be working closely with the Department, in collaboration with partners from Africa and the Caribbean Community, to achieve the dual objective of organizing annual commemorative activities in tribute to the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, and erecting a permanent memorial in their honour, for which a design competition in partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had been launched.

47. His delegation urged the Department to raise awareness of the dangers and impact of the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons across the globe. It should publicize the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty and the second United Nations Small Arms Review Conference, two important events to be held in 2012, and an issue of the *UN Chronicle* should be devoted to the question of the proliferation of conventional weapons and the efforts to combat it.

48. **Mr. Al Zayani** (Bahrain) said the Department of Public Information was a sort of mirror that reflected the various activities of the United Nations. It also worked to disseminate information about them. In the context of preparations for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development to be held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, for example, the Department

was promoting discussion on such relevant issues as forests, oceans, biodiversity and climate change. It had played a similar role with respect to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases, the launch of UN-Women and the second celebration of Nelson Mandela Day, all in 2011, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, natural disasters, and the special information programme on the question of Palestine.

49. The United Nations information centres that functioned under the aegis of the Department played a key supporting role in heightening people's awareness of United Nations activities and objectives. The Centre located in Manama, the capital of Bahrain, had undertaken numerous activities in partnership with Bahraini associations, including the organization of a basketball tournament for boys and a soccer tournament for girls. While every effort should be made to narrow, if not close, the digital divide, many developing countries still lacked sophisticated media and thus relied on traditional media for the dissemination of information; and the United Nations information centres were highly useful in that connection.

50. The Department was in a good position to ensure that the benefits of information and communication technologies were available to all; as called for in the United Nations Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2, para. 20). It could do so only by proceeding along the trail blazed by the General Assembly when, in resolution 34/182, it advocated the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order, one based on the free circulation of information and intended to strengthen peace and international understanding.

51. **Mr. Benashur** (Libya) expressed appreciation for the important role played by the Department of Public Information in heightening awareness of the economic, social, political and humanitarian aims of the United Nations, and of its action in areas such as security, peacekeeping, and international law.

52. It was essential to promote the principles of freedom of information and freedom of the press, but it was equally essential to correct the disparities between developing and developed countries with respect to the technical capacities and facilities of their respective media. Narrowing the information and communication gap was a priority issue, one that called for greater international cooperation and assistance to the developing countries in the form of training, capacity-building and technical and human resource development. Yet the traditional media should not be overlooked: they should be developed in step with their state-of-the-art counterparts.

53. Because of the vital nature of its work, it was important for the Department to eliminate disparities and inequalities in its use of the Organization's official languages. In addition, sufficient prominence had not been given to information on certain issues, such as a dialogue between civilizations and the vilification of some religions. The question of Palestine, the suffering of the Palestinian people under occupation and its right to self-determination also deserved greater attention. That said, the training programme for Palestinian media practitioners that the Department organized every year was a highly useful means of developing their capacities and skills.

54. In the twenty-first century, information was of vital importance as a means of shaping public opinion. Libya had seen how dangerous false or misleading information could be, as the former regime had used such information to divide the people and rouse tribal, factional and partisan feeling at the expense of the interests of the nation and the people. Unfortunately, elements of the former regime were still at work, using looted wealth to create anarchy and instability in Libya, with the help of certain States.

55. The Department of Public Information should work closely with national media, organizing workshops, seminars and the like for senior media representatives, regarding the role of information in strengthening peace and bolstering human rights concepts.

56. **Mr. Díaz Bartolomé** (Argentina) said that his country supported the work of the United Nations information centres, so vital in spreading the United Nations message. The Buenos Aires Centre, successful as the Spanish voice of the Department of Public Information, had organized activities including panels, training workshops and Model United Nations, and had also worked with radio, television and print journalists to produce information about the Organization and its agencies.

57. People needed to be able to access information in their own languages, and his delegation supported the commitment of the Department to multilingualism. It was concerned that the latest report of the Secretary-General did not refer to the issue, especially since parity among the six official languages remained a pending goal. The Department had been working on the problem, however, and had updated several thematic web pages and commemorative sites in the six languages. His delegation was pleased to note that the website in Spanish had expanded to become the second most visited page in 2010 and 2011, even though not as much content was available in Spanish as in English. Yet it was disheartening that press releases continued to be disseminated in only two languages. The mandate to disseminate all documents in all six official languages must be respected and lack of resources no longer justified the delay. The Department could perhaps, as a short-term solution, publish all press releases in English and regularly rotate the second language of publication.

58. In respect of traditional media, which should continue to be used along with new media, he commended the work of United Nations Radio in Spanish, and the general expansion of the radio and television services, as well as the digitization of documents to preserve the Organization's heritage.

59. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Department of Public Information, in the course of producing accurate, impartial and timely information about the Organization, should cooperate closely with the Committee on Information, which had an important policy role. He welcomed the celebration of the first International Day of Nowruz and encouraged the Department to continue publicizing the event.

60. The digital divide between developed and developing countries continued to widen. Developing countries suffered from an unjust monopoly over the media by certain developed countries, which distorted or fabricated news, especially in relation to developing countries. The international community should take steps to rectify the imbalances in access to information and communication technologies in order to make the media world equitable and impartial. The Department, for its part, should produce information in areas of special interest to the developing countries, and thus help bridge the gap.

61. The Department had an important responsibility to raise international awareness of the question of Palestine and to shed more light on the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It should also use its worldwide presence to counter the trend towards defamation of Islam and denigration of Muslims and to foster respect for all religions. Promoting dialogue among civilizations and cultures promoted understanding among people, and the activities of the Organization should also foster such dialogue.

62. The United Nations information centres were the interface between the Organization and the international community and were crucial in enhancing its public image. There should be close consultation between the centres and the host countries, and careful attention should be paid to the cultural, social, and economic needs of the regions they served. The centres should be equipped with advanced technology and given adequate resources.

63. The Department's efforts to ensure multilingualism were also important. The Department should continue to produce information not only in the six official languages, but also in local languages that were widely regarded as the roots of great civilizations, including Persian, spoken by several nations in the Near Eastern region.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.